

# Foresthill MESSENGER

## NEWS

### Foresthill Bioenergy Initiative Status Update

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The Foresthill Bioenergy Steering Committee meets regularly at 6:00 pm on the third Wednesday of the month in the community room at the Foresthill Library (meetings are open to the public). As a reminder, the proposed bioenergy project can convert waste wood, i.e. ladder fuels, from private and public forests into electrical energy, heat, fuel and biochar, which can then be used as soil amendment or water filtration element.



The bioenergy project was discussed during the third in a series of town hall meetings in October, 2014. Since that time, Placer County Resource Conservation District (RCD) has been working with various consultants to develop a feasibility study with funding from Placer County Air Pollution Control District, Placer County and Placer County Water Agency. Draft results of the feasibility study should be available in March 2015. The final results can be the basis for determining whether or not a bioenergy project will be viable in Foresthill.

A second study, funded by the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, includes the important element of a "value-added" component and what it brings to the Foresthill community and Placer County if a bioenergy facility is built. Value-added considers additional benefits that come from a bioenergy project, such as various wood-product industries. Community input about opportunities and ideas are welcome.

As mentioned above, the draft results for the feasibility and value added studies should be available in March 2015. These studies are being conducted to determine if there is sufficient economic justification for funding to be spent on either project. Factors that can influence the economic justification include environmental issues, potential future business growth, long-term viability of the project, technological feasibility (can it be built), determining if there are sufficient materials for the project, and what benefits the project might bring to the Foresthill region (i.e. jobs, reduced fire risk, fewer emissions from fire).

Technologically, a bioenergy project (conversion of forest waste, i.e. slash, ladder fuels, etc., to energy) is very feasible. Environmentally, reduction of smoke and particulate matter would benefit everyone, provided the facility remains within emission levels appropriate for the region. Long-term growth depends on availability and economics of slash and ladder fuels from private and public land owners. Community benefits resulting from a bioenergy project are jobs and potential to encourage other businesses to come to Foresthill. The recommendations from both studies could result in attracting a developer, with potential investors, for a bioenergy facility or value added businesses.

If the decision is made to build a bioenergy facility, a preliminary design could be developed and at the same time an environmental impact study could be conducted. The environmental impact study will follow the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act or CEQA. The CEQA study will consider how the project affects noise volumes, air pollution, traffic congestion, water, soil, economics, area population, and wildlife habitat. This process can take up to two years. Once the CEQA study is completed, the design of the project can be finalized, incorporating any mitigating conditions from the CEQA study. Provided the project is funded, designs are drawn, permits procured, bids received, and building commences.

Since the feasibility study is scheduled to be completed by April 2015, the Bioenergy Steering Committee seeks immediate assistance from Foresthill residents in providing comments to the consultants developing the study. These comments can be sent to Elisa Noble at [elisa@plascercountycd.org](mailto:elisa@plascercountycd.org). Your input will facilitate transparency and insure inclusion of community feedback in the final report.

If you have not had an opportunity to learn about this project, we encourage you to visit (<http://vimeo.com/foresthill/videos>) where you can view Foresthill Bioenergy Steering Committee meeting videos as well as other meetings that have been held in the community.